

The Merselis-Van Houten House
Upper Preakness
Wayne Township, Passaic County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

The Merselis-Van Houten House
Upper Preakness
Wayne Township, Passaic County, New Jersey

Owner: Mr. Jesse Van Houten

Date of Erection: About 1750

Architect:

Builder: A member of the Merselis family

Present Condition: Fair

Number of Stories: Two

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - the main part of the house is of native brown sandstone; rear of rubble stone, mostly of native brown sandstone but with some blue stone and trap rock broken out from field-stone. The wing is brick; walls above concrete

Interior walls - plaster

Roof - main part shingles; wing slate probably shingles originally

Historical Data:

The early history of this house is rather hazy. There is a disagreement as to which of the two Merselis houses was the original. The Doremus family arrived in East Jersey in 1650; a descendant of this

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family, Mr. J. Wortendyke Doremus of Paterson, contends that the Merselis-Van Houten House is the original house. Two groups of boxwood in the front and south of the house appear to support this view; these are anywhere from one hundred and seventy-five to two hundred years old.

The face brick of the east wing do not appear to be of local manufacture; they resemble the type of brick used in Trenton and Philadelphia. The brick walls are not well constructed and are cracking and bulging. The design of the main porch is unusual. The present owner believes that there was formerly a seat and a rail on each side of the platform. There are no structural indications of them. In the interior there are many interesting features; the stair nowels, the rails, and balusters are cherry; the rest of the interior woodwork is painted white. The main room of the first story was apparently two rooms.

South of the house across the present drive is the foundation of a former small building which Dr. Rauchfuss thinks was the foundation of a slave kitchen.

Bibliography:

Information from Dr. Rauchfuss

Field Book and Drawings of Survey

Melvin C. Rutt
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, A.I.A.
District Officer

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